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**LANKA SAMASAMAJA PARTY
AND
THE TAMIL SPEAKING PEOPLE**

**By
Dr. Vickramabahu Karunarathne**

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PREFACE

Over the past few decades the national oppression of the Tamil speaking people has increased tremendously. The present U. N. P. government has tried to make a show of 'giving them concessions by making some cosmetic reforms and by taking in renegades from the T. U. L. F. into the cabinet. However none of the problems of the Tamil nation have been solved and in fact police and army repression in the North has increased.

The new leadership of the Lanka Samamsaja Party stands for the right of self-determination of the Tamil nation. Unlike others whose stand on this question is purely verbal we have actively campaigned on this issue. For example we have been the only party to put up posters demanding the immediate release from detention of the **Ilaiganar Peravai** leaders Senathirajah and Kasi Anandan. We are also the only party to have put forward a Tamil candidate for the mayoralty in a predominantly Sinhalese town. As a result we have been accused of being **Elamists** by the pro-U.N.P. press, the S. L. F. P. "Dinakara", the ultra racist "Mathrubhumi" and also by the "Janadina" of the L.S. S. P. old leadership.

The national question, is one of the major problems of the Sri Lankan revolution. It can only be solved by a workers and peasants government. We the new leadership of the L. S. S. P., will endeavour to link up the broad struggles of the workers and peasants with the national struggle of the Tamils in order to create such a government.

Vasudeva Nanayakkara
On behalf of the Central Committee.

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The Lanka Samasamaja Party and The Tamil Speaking People

Samasamajism is very familiar to the Tamil speaking people. Everybody knows that we stand for working class politics which is necessarily revolutionary. It is neither Sinhala party nor a Tamil party but working class party. Still, there are a number of aspects of our history that should be explained in some detail with particular emphasis on the development of our attitude towards the national question. During 1964/75 our old leadership (N. M., Karalasingham, Vishvanathan, Colvin Leslie) dragged us through a Coalition with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. There was a clear opposition within the party to this policy since '64. In 1964 some of the opposition led by comrades Bala, Samarakkody etc openly broke from the party and tried to develop as an independent group. This was a fatal mistake on their part and they rapidly disintegrated into a number of splinter groups and to this day remain as sects unable to make any impact on national politics. Actual opposition to the coalition politics was within the party and continued to develop throughout the period 1964/65. True, it was not very strong and evident at the beginning, but it has developed today into a real alternate leadership. This is all part of history; yet it is invaluable today in understanding the present politics of the Samasamajists. Now the Samasamaja movement has a new leadership. A revolutionary internationalist leadership that has developed through both theoretical and practical struggles of the recent past. What were these struggles? What did we stand for? Names such as Vasudeva, Kumar David, Anthony Pillai and Vickramabahu may be familiar to you, but what politics is associated with them. These are the questions we are trying to answer in this pamphlet.

There was an opposition within the Lanka Samasamaja party even in the early stages of its development; in the 1930's and 1940's. This was directed against the tendency towards populism and reformism associated at first with Philip and later with N. M. This developed into an open conflict when the oppositionists, named 'Bolsheviks' at that time captured the party machinery and expelled both Philip and N. M. This revolutionary tendency was led by Colvin and Leslie. Though at that stage the Samasamajists as a whole stood for the rights of the Tamil speaking people, only the Bolshevik wing stood firmly by its principles particularly in respect of the citizenship rights of the estate workers. Thus they stood their ground when Communist Party leaders were conciliatory towards the U. N. P.

Unfortunately this "Bolshevik" opposition abandoned its uncompromising stand on this and many other issues after uniting with and accepting the leadership of Dr. N. M. Perera in 1950. Since then till the break in '64 it existed as a formless opposition within the party hardly recognised by any body outside of it. When the reformist wing blatantly raised its head in the early 1960's against this, the opposition could not carry out a firm and consistent struggle. Thus, the '64 coalition decision was a victory for reformism without a real battle. Some of those who were in the opposition such as Edmund and Bala broke away from the party and liquidated themselves in sectarian politics. Internal struggle for revolutionary principles fell on the shoulders of new elements. These new elements developed their Marxist orientation from the struggle for Marxism that took place in the International arena. After forming a nucleus within the party they launched a struggle for Marxist politics against the opportunism of the leadership.

This is not the place to go into the details of the entire struggle of the Marxist tendency within the Lanka Samasamaja Party. What is relevant here is their position concerning the struggle of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka; now they stood for the rights of the Tamil speaking people and what concrete steps they took.

In this early period as an internal tendency we were mostly concentrated in the Kandy area. Naturally our first concrete intervention was in a struggle that developed in that location. In the year 1966 there was a strike at Galaha Estate where the owners and the management mobilized a section of the Sinhala villagers from the surrounding villages to pounce on the strikers. The leaders of the strike had to run away and hide in the jungle. For weeks workers did not get their rations. We were instrumental in mobilising the support of the students and villagers for the strike and neutralizing the spread of Communalism. Braving the threats of the communal thugs a leaflet in Sinhala and Tamil was distributed in the estate and the surrounding villages. Later the C. I. D. was inquiring as to the source of the leaflet which was printed on behalf of the Peradeniya LSSP youth league. At that time we were busy working in the estate area making use of the Lanka Estate Workers Union. This was at a time when the LSSP and the CP leaderships had completely compromised themselves on the issue of the Minorities and had largely neglected the estate worker. The L. E. W. U. remained a force in the area due mainly to our efforts.

However we have to admit that as a tendency our influence within the party at this early stages was not wide spread. We were not mature enough to put forward a complete alternate program to that offered by the leadership. Naturally on each issue we raised our objections. Towards 1970 the opposition was taking form. The Magazine 'Markswadaya' (Marxism) started in 1970 by the Kandy District LSSP youth league committee was a part of this development.

Our struggle within the LSSP led to an open clash with the bureaucracy of the leadership. After the formation of the Coalition Government the threat of the party bureaucracy increased. The Kandy party branch was considered to be a trouble spot by the party centre. Most of our resolutions and protests were ignored and it was becoming increasingly clear that a democratic discussion within the party was being made impossible. If we were to remain within the party it was

necessary to work as a clandestine tendency. This was the only possible way to take a Marxist program to the organized trade union movement.

During the period 70/71 while keeping our roots firmly in the working class movement (and facing the threats of the opportunists) we fought against the false ideas of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramanna led by Rohana Wijeweera. Even at that time Peradeniya Campus was an arena for a battle of political ideas. The LSSP and CP leaders, instead of facing the challenge of the JVP in the domain of political theory and ideology, joined the state oppression. This was inevitable in the context of their opportunist political line. We completely opposed this and, on our own, had open discussions and debates with the JVP. We showed them that their political position about the estate workers and minorities in general was completely wrong. In particular, we firmly and resolutely opposed their idea of Indian expansionism. Our struggle opened the eyes of many who were under JVP influence.

Our complete analysis of the political line of the LSSP old leadership and the way forward as seen by us was circulated among the membership in 1972. This was in the document named "Whither Ourselves." This is what we said in the document about the national question.

"National and Economic Unification:- The basis for development will be laid by organising production and distribution properly. For this it is necessary to eradicate the traditional social boundaries, artificially brought to the surface. The main features of this problem are Caste, Race antagonisms etc. and the divergence between the cities and the villages. It is through the break down of these barriers that the resources in the country can be transformed into utilizable forms.

Populism (i. e. the SLFP) has a dirty and foul history in the domain of breakdown of communal, caste and religious barriers. It is hardy necessary to speak about it.....

In order to carryout these tasks (i.e. national unification) populism is a hindrance and not a help. There can be no doubt today that these tasks can be carried out only by defeating populism and winning over the petty bourgeois under our leadership" (Page 18- "An important question in the party".)

At the 1972 November party conference, we colobarated with the oppositional second resolution while putting forward our views in the form of a discussion document. In that we took the following position:

"Problem of national minority: A solution has not been achieved to the problem of national unity which would have brought political unity to the country. Due to this, the Tamil petty bourgeoisie, Estate Workers, students and youth are steadily thrown under the bourgeois-nationalist leadership. How the neglected bourgeois-democratic tasks are brought to the surface is seen through the problems of the national minority. In the face of the present economic crisis, the emergence of fascist ideologies is the compensation to be paid for our negligence". "(viii) National minority problem should be solved such that no national or language is victimised and all nations and languages are given equal treatment" (Pages 26/28-ibit).

It was a decisive conference. The second resolution was defeated when some of the signatories led by Dr. Osmund Jayaratne unceromoniously abandoned their position and succumbed to the pressures of the Old Leadership. Vasudeva, Oswin Fernando, Edwin Kotawa'a, are the only signatories who held their ground facing all the threats of the bureacracy. This conference consolidated our struggle to build an alternate leadership. These Comrades of the Central Committee who had been taking an increasingly critical view of the party leadership throughout 70 - 72 were a great asset to the opposition. It is to be noted that during the 71 rebellion Vasudeva was taken into custody and kept in Jail without any charges for

one year and two months. Though he had absolute'y no connection with the J.V.P., Bourgeois realised the danger of the critical attitude he was taking and was all out to terrorise him into submission.

Immediately after the '72 conference, Vickramabahu, Sumanasiri, Siritunga (three of the leading elements of our tendency) were thrown out of the party undemocratically for circulating the document "Whither ourselves". From our side this expulsion had advantages too. For the first time we were able to come out with our ideas openly in public. Still, we were working mainly within the Lanka Samasamaja Party as the opposition. We started publishing a month'y paper in Sinhala with an English Supplement. Though arrangements were made several times a Tamil paper could not be published due to lack of resources particularly inadequacy of comrades competent in Tamil. The English supplement was published mainly to approach the Radical Tamil intellectuals and advanced Tamil workers. Naturally the national question was a main item in it. The following excerpts would show the position we took and the campaign we made.

'Workers must pose independent solutions!

.....There has been too much emphasis on notions of development, re-organisation and hopes about what can be implemented of the anti-imperialist democratic program through and under populist leadership and parliament. The working class, the rural poor, and the minority groups were asked to carry heavy burdens for the reforms carried out under the joint program. For example, for the sake of land reform severe damage was done to estate labour....."

Page 3 Vama Samasamajaya (English) Vol. 2-1

"Release All Political Prisoners!

.....sudden arrest, search without normal legal proceedings and restrictions of democratic rights of political prisoners are becoming a part of day to

day life. So far most of those who were affected belong to the petty bourgeois elements and Tamil minority agitators....J.C.T.U.O. should immediately take up the slogan of 'Release all political prisoners'. It should not only protest on behalf of its own following but, those petty bourgeois and minority radicals who have expressed their disregard for bourgeois establishment".

Page-4-Vama Samasamajaya (English) Vol. 2-4

Nemesis at K. K. S.!

"It is necessary to be quite clear about the real issues that provoked the swing at K. K. S. as important political lessons flow from it. They are, in order of importance,

- (i) The Education Ministry's fake scheme of University admissions.
- (ii) The extreme discrimination against the employment of educated Tamil youth, in particular those with qualifications in the higher professions like Medicine, Accountancy and Engineering in the State and Corporation Sector,
- (iii) The use of repressive organs of State; in particular the detention without trial for long periods? of Tamil youth leaders".

Page-1-Vama Samasamajaya (English) Vol. 2-4

At this stage we mobilised all our resources to take the 28 demands movement of the trade unions (led by LSSP—CP) forward. It was our contention that the struggle of the Tamil speaking people should be linked with the workers struggle for the 28 Demands. Such a coordinated national struggle would have thrown the Coalition Government into a crisis and a national movement under the hegemony of the working class would have emerged, defeating chavanistic elements decisively. Our campaign among the Tamil speaking people was based on this political thinking. In september 1973 we circulated an internal bulletin through the Kurunegala

District committee which elaborated this line of thinking In this document we showed very clearly the danger of party degeneration and particularly the communalists streak that was developing. Further, we showed that the problem of Tamil speaking people is definitely taking the form of a national question. Leadership reacted to this document by suspending the membership of the district secretary Karunaratne Jayasuriya and few others.

There were several seminars in Jaffna attended by us during the years 74/75. (One of these is the seminar organised by the Social Study Circle of Jaffna. In this seminar Professor A. Thurairajah and Dr. Krishnanathasivan spoke on Technological problems related to the agriculture in the Jaffna area. Dr. Vickramabahu, one of the leading elements of our tendency, spoke on the national question. Perhaps for the first time in the history of Sri Lanka the right of self-determination was explained in respect of the Tamils of this country. It was explained that Tamils as a nation has the inalienable right to self determination, that is in effect the right to secede. This fundamental right will be defended unconditionally. But separatism as a solution we do not agree with and do not advocate and we consider such a program detrimental to the interests of the workers both in the South and the North under the present circumstances. Unity can be worked out by a truly democratic constitution based on equality of both nations. However even with their program of separatism the Tamils should unite their struggle with the struggle of the workers (i. e. 28-Demand movement). They must join the common struggle against the bourgeois oppression backed by imperialism. We will fight side by side with them against any violence or force used to suppress their right to secede or agitate for secession. The T. U. L. F. leadership did not agree with such a course of action as they are representatives of the exploiters, caste oppressors etc. In addition to all this the nature of the '72 Republican constitution was explained in relation to the growth of the class struggle.

We continuously tried to point out to the radical Tamil youth of the Tamil national movement that they must struggle side by side with the workers. Though the workers

movement was dragged (unsuccessfully) into communal politics, in general it stood against communalism. Even with the separatist slogan the Tamil national-democratic movement is faced with only two alternatives. Either it should join the struggle of the workers, i. e. the movement of 28-Demands at that time, or it should be a pawn in the hands of imperialist conspirators. We had discussions with leaders such as V. Dharmalingam and through joint seminars put across our views to the radical elements of the Tamil democratic movement.

In the years '73-75 the Left movement in the Tamil areas was in complete disarray. After the LSSP and the CP (Moscow) joined the SLFP in a coalition most of the Tamil militants joined the radical end of the Tamil democratic movement (later known as the TULF). A few of them found their way into the Maoist school which by that time had become a complete dead end. Apart from violently opposing the TULF they had no independent position on the national question. They of course maintained that a solution would come through socialism (Maoist Style!). It was ridiculous for them to maintain that the S. L. F. P. is a "progressive" national bourgeois movement while at the same time classifying T. U. L. F. as an entirely reactionary movement. To say the least, it was in a state of total confusion. Following dall other sects they were incapable of recognising a national democratic movement of an oppressed nation. We had several debates and discussions with members of these groups which were fruitful in convincing some of their rank and file members.

We were the first Left group who invited the T. U. L. F. leaders to come to South to explain their position. We completely rejected their bourgeois politics and did not advocate their program of separatism. Yet we were prepared to defend their right of expression, particularly in the Southern areas. This is one aspect of the defense of the right for self determination in concrete terms. We organised a seminar at Peradeniya on the national question where they were invited to participate. Mr. Kadiravelupillai and a few others participated from their side while our position was

put forward mainly by comrades Vasudeva, Phillipupillai and Vickramabahu. This was perhaps the first instance where T. U. L. F. leaders addressed a public meeting in South, and went a long way for many there in understanding the right of self determination.

What is the right to self determination? How do Marxists defend this right even when they are agitating against secession? These were the key questions raised at that time and our answer was very clear. The following excerpts from Vamasamasamajaya show our position in relation to these questions. It is necessary to make it clear that we explained our position in our Sinhala paper consistently. Naturally, it is the Sinhala masses who should be made to understand the evils of oppression of the national minorities.

Problems of the Tamils

..... Firstly, the Sinhala and Tamil people can live together as one nation state only by mutual and voluntary agreement of the mass of the two people. The forcible retention of a minority within a state is a form of oppression that the revolutionary working class movement rejects. Without a sympathetic and understanding and approach towards a national minority their confidence can never be gained. Without recognising their fundamental right to self-determination all talk of unity and brotherhood are empty words - what sense is there in attempting to persuade a minority to remain united if in the first instance we do not recognise their right to make the final decision one way or the other, Secondly, we do not **advocate or advise** Tamil masses to separate. (The fact that the majority of the Tamil masses are probably against secession at the moment is beside the point, because this situation can change depending on the stupidity of the government). So while we recognise the right and freedom of the mass of the Tamil people to make the eventual decision we **will also explain patently** and campaign indefatigably among the Tamil people to show that for social, economic and political reasons

secession will be a serious step backwarpd on the historical road for both races....."

(Emphasis added)

Dr. Kumar David - Vama Samasamajaya (Vol. 2-11 Page 4
(This article is given in the appendix)

"The National Minority Question and the Working Class.
..... The Marxist position on this question has been most clearly enunciated by Lenin especially in the celebrated polemic against Rosa 'Luxemburg "The right of nations to self-determination". As Lenin pointed out, not to accept the right of self determination, amounts to support of the oppression of national minorities by the bourgeoisie of the majority nationality. Marxists are of course opposed to breaking up of national entities. But they are even more opposed to the forcible suppression of the democratic rights of national minorities and their forced union with the majority nationality. The Leninist position was that of voluntary union which can become a reality in a federal socialist republic of different nationalities (communities).

This principled position was put into practice during and after the Bolshevik revolution. Indeed Lenin's nationalities policy was instrumental in securing the support of the national minorities to the socialist revolution. After the revolution Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia under bourgeois Governments and under the influence of imperialism decided to separate and were allowed to do so by the soviet power. But in the Ukraine and in Georgia the workers overthrew the bourgeois power and with the support of the peasantry set up their own soviet power which decided to federate with the Russian Soviet power. Thus was the basis laid for the union of soviet socialist republics on foundation of mutual trust and co-operation. Of course with the betrayal of the revolution and Leninist principles under Stalin national oppression - Great Russian Chauvinism, was reintroduced in the Soviet Union - and that is precisely one of the many counter-revolutionary fea-

tures of Stalinism that the Trotskyist movement exposed -but that is a different story”

Gurusinghe - Left Samasamajaya Vol. 1-4 page 33

(English translations of both these articles are given in the appendix)

We always maintained that though we do not advocate separatism that we are prepared to fight together with the TUF (later TULF) against state oppression. We were prepared to fight concretely to defend their right to agitate for saperatism. We were prepared for joint agitation, demonstrations and any other mass action against oppression. But the T. U. F. leaders were not agreeable, under the pretext of Ghandism and non-violence! Naturally they were more afraid of the masses behind them than of the oppressive state machinery.

It is necessary to point out at this stage that when we came out with the first issue of the English paper we were taken into custody by C. I. D. officers from the famous 4th floor. They were let loose by the Sirima-Felix leadership. Two A. S. P's from the fourth floor led the whole operation. Vickramabahu, Sumanasiri, Kumar David, Siritunga and others were taken into custody. This was when N. M, Colvin and Leslie were still important members of the Cabinet. They reacted to this by immediately expelling from the party those who were taken into custody. and who were still party members. It was very clear they would have sacrificed anything to preserve the 'Unity of the Cabinet'. That means complete subjugation of one's independence to Felix and the like.

During the period 1973/74 Estate Workers had to undergo severe hardships. In many places estate staff and estate workers and up country Tamils were thrown out in the process of take over of estates. Many workers were sleeping in the sheds at bus halts under most miserable conditions. Nawalapitiya and Gampola were the worst hit. This was a very difficult time for the Left movement in general. While

defending the nationalization policy we took a firm stand in opposing these criminal acts of certain Sinha's petty-bourgeois elements.

Some of the Tamil estate staff were desperate. We were the on'y political group which came out with the necessary political direction for the estate staff and workers. A resolution adopted by the Estate Staff Union, with our influence, condemned the criminal violence while defending the nationalization. It said,

“Unfortunately lack of any foresighted policy in relation to land reform has often led to the very negation of the above mentioned aims. Firstly, anti-imperialism has been converted by dull witted opportunists to communal slogan shouting. Liberation from imperialism is fundamentally a process of unifying our nation. Communalism stands in direct opposition to this and hence it is the very negation of anti-imperialism. It will drive wide sections of the minorities into the areas of reaction and make them the very tools of imperialism.....So it will not solve anything. On the one hand, we have estate workers thrown out on the streets with their families and not so favoured frustrated village youth, and on the other hand, an inflationary estate sector heading towards bankruptcy.....”

1. We demand that immediate arrangements be made to allocate definite and adequate quota of flour to all estates (proportionate to the number of resident workers) and to distribute same among resident workers through a tentative estate co-operative system. (This kind of arrangement can be extended to all large work sites and workers' residential areas). We insist that failure to do so will inevitably result in large scale under-nourishment, drop in production and aggravation of the crisis resulting in mass scale human destruction.

2. We declare our solidarity with the 28 Demands of the J. C. T. U. O. inclusive of the minimum wage demand and demand the implementation of same.

3. We demand the reinstatement of all Plantation workers who have been displaced as a result of acquisition of estates. We demand that adequate health and educational facilities be provided to plantation workers.

4. We demand the immediate finalization of the collective agreement with the Ceylon Estate Employers' Federation with necessary revisions to meet present day conditions.

5. We demand that all estate workers irrespective of their nationality be given the right to vote and be elected to all local level committees (such as conciliation Boards, Cultivation Committees etc.) including the election of Local Bodies.

6. We demand that all repatriations under the Sirima-Shastri pact be on a voluntary basis only and the execution of the pact be completed within 5 years. We also demand that nationality of the so-called third category of 175000 stateless persons be resolved immediately thus giving legal status to those so called stateless persons".

We tried to take similar resolutions to the other unions in the estate sector, especially to the Lanka Estate Workers' Union controlled by the Lanka Samasamaja Party. Also these positions were put forward in every seminar and discussion that we participated in during that time. Our influence in the estate sector today owes very much to the struggle we engaged in during those difficult days.

As mentioned above, the plight of some of the plantation labourers was much worse. In fact it was a time for a new Suriya-mal campaign. At this stage we were instrumental in organizing "the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights of Estate Workers" This organization which included many independent socialists like Dr. Sinnathambi was in the

campaign against criminal ejections, break up of unions and general terrorism. We were members of the coordinating secretariat set up in relation to the problem. This was initiated by Rev. Paul Caspursz and Rev. Tissa Balasuriya.

Another issue that came up during this time was the problem of standardization at university entrance. As a concession to the rural Sinhala middle classes, government took steps for district basis selection and went further for the media-wise standardisation due the pressure of the Sinhala Upper Classes. It was presented as a short term solution. Actually, it was a means of covering up the complete inability of the ruling classes to solve the acute crisis in the field of higher education. What was necessary was large scale investment in all rural areas for secondary education and in the Universities particularly for all science sections. Government was not prepared for that. Instead it was bent on overall reduction of expenditure in the field of education. We exposed this very clearly.

"The prospect of higher education and employment in the south were two of the most basic material premises that bound Jaffna society into the national economy. Rights and wrongs apart, this is a plain fact, and if these prospects are cut off the Tamil middle classes will cease to have a material incentive or motivation to think nationally. The logic of separation will now find the objective conditions that it needs to gain credence. Cash crop production for national market is still a long way off from serving as an adequate antidote; even if it is marginally developed purely economically with the present chaotic market forms, it has still not penetrated and been absorbed by the ideological superstructure of Jaffna Society.

The main villains are of course the now dying tribe of Sinhala Chauvanists whose unrepentent pressure seems to be felt at high offices in various ministries such as education and in State corporations.

Dr. Kumar David-Vama Samasamajaya Vol. 2.-4 page 4

We contested the Colombo South by election against JR on behalf of the Samasamaja movement in July 1975. The old leadership, tied up with coalition politics did not dare to face the challenge of JR. In the election program that we put forward the questions were given their due place.

“Minorities”

The justified suspicions that occupy the minds of the national minorities must be overcome in order to complete the task of national integration. The right of the Tamil people to function without hindrance in their own language must be guaranteed. In recent years the Tamils have suffered special discrimination in the field of education. We renounce communal or religious motivated reforms to national education.

The workers of recent Indian origin who contribute much to the national product are degraded to the level of third class citizens. Plantation workers who are prepared to embrace this country as their motherland should be granted citizenship.

—By election program of Siritunga Jayasuriya—

In both these issues the old leadership completely submitted themselves to the pressure of Sinhala national petty-bourgeoisie. Our campaign on these issues brought the Vama tendency increasingly into collision course with the leadership and their epigony. It was particularly painful to them, when some of the members of the tendency (who were within the party) made use of the official organs of the party to highlight these two problems. Especially, ‘The Nation’ a weekly paper published by the old leadership for the English educated was made use of effectively. This campaign was conducted by Dr. Kumar David who was at that time (72-74) one of the editors of ‘The Nation’. One can understand the readiness with which he was expelled from the party when he was questioned by the C. I. D. (fourth floor) in connection with the paper “Vama Samasamajaya”.

Throughout 1970/75, while putting forward the programs mentioned above we were campaigning for the old leadership to move against the bourgeois leadership of Sirima - Felix. We pressed them to take the 28-Demand movement forward and to approach the Tamil masses undermining the chauvanist leadership of the S. L. F. P. This campaign aggravated the conflict that was developing within the Cabinet. On the other hand it exposed the LSSP-CP old leadership, who maintained that they will be able to defeat the chauvanist right wing leadership of the SLFP within the coalition and move towards socialism.

By the end of 1975, crisis in the coalition reached a peak. Trade union movement mobilised under 28-Demands was moving into open confrontation with the government inspite of the opportunism of its leadership. This was too much for Sirima and she decided to disorganise the growing pressure of the Trade Union movement. This was very clear from the way the LSSP leaders were thrown out of the government. These leaders did not prove anything new. Like many others before them they participated in a capitalist government and helped the bourgeois to contain the struggle of workers, students, peasants and national minorities. After sacrificing every principle, they did not achieve anything except those so called radical measures. These measures, such as the constitution of 1972, Land Reform etc. are nothing but the surgeries required by an ailing bourgeois system. In practice all of them were involved in measures of counter revolution.

Once they were thrown out the LSSP old leadership wanted to forge a new alliance with the so called left of the SLFP. They were particularly keen on forming a Front under Kobbekaduwa's leadership. After leaving Marxist oriented politics for good they had no alternative but to engage in this sort of ridiculous dreams. We were completely opposed to this and suggested that they should take steps to forge a united left front based on class struggle as an alternative to both the UNP and the SLFP. Such a Front will be able to approach the Tamil militants as opposed to the bourgeois leaders of the T. U. L. F. First step towards formation of

such a Front was to have forced the CP to break away from the government. We proposed that they put forward a draft program for discussion. They of course refused. In our paper we put forward a draft program and the sections on national question and the constitution are as follows:

6. Problem of National Minorities.

The problem of national minorities especially that of Tamil speaking people (Jaffna and Baticaloa Tamils, Muslims, Estate workers) has become an acute problem due to the rule of capitalism. It is an absolute lie to say that this problem has been solved or the foundation for a solution was laid in the republican constitution. Tamil people of the North and East as a nation are fighting for their rights. There cannot be a solution to this problem nor a complete national liberation nor a united state, until it is accepted by the Sinhala masses that they are a nation and their right of self determination, i. e. the right of deciding with which nations they will join and how they will join. The transitional demands that arise out of the concrete struggle for true national unity are (i) The consolidation of the rights of Tamil citizens to communicate with the state in his own language (ii) Regional Administration in the North and the East be carried out by the intervention of the people of that area and by the Tamil language (This is connected with the democratization of the entire state i. e. establishing Autonomy) (iii) Selection for university entrance and jobs without discrimination on language or racial basis (iv) Removal of the oppression against speaking and agitating on behalf of national minorities (v) Organising the development of the Northern and Eastern provinces with the allocation of the proper share of the national plan. In carrying out these tasks and changing the constitution accordingly, foundation for real national unity will be laid.

Muslim Masses : They are, though bound together by religious and cultural ties, not developed as a nation based on a region. Their needs differ widely according to the class differentiation. As different social layers, they are distributed throughout the country. It is necessary to form a state institute

to look into the special problems faced by the lower and middle Muslim masses in relation to the education, jobs and land.

Up country Tamil people are tossed here and there as third class citizens. Full citizenship should be granted to all estate workers who consider this country their own. One of the main tasks of the revolutionary (in democratisation of the village structure) is to bring about real unity between the estate and the neighbouring villages. In their problems the most important is to safeguard their rights as full citizens (in education, land ownership, jobs).

9. Democracy and Human Rights

“— — — lifting of the emergency, complete release of youth involved in the insurrection of '71, guarantee of their rights as normal citizens, release of all political prisoners including the Tamil youth, political rights of all state employees, guarantee of Human Rights in the constitution without any conditions. These steps are immediately necessary. Especially the lack of political freedom for those who are branded as being involved in 1971 insurrection and as terrorists and the imposing of special limits and boundaries to the political freedom of Tamil youth should be immediately removed”

Vama Samasamajaya (Sinhala Vol. 2-14)

While proposing this program as the way out for a United Left Front we directed our attention on the working class struggles that were developing at that time both in the private and the public sectors. When the Railway strike broke out and started spreading to other sectors, old leadership of the LSSP and the CP were not prepared to direct it and take the struggle forward. They were totally involved in the parliamentary manipulations. We took the responsibility in directing most of the party trade union elements. Particularly in the Railway Workers Union. (This is why the LSSP controlled Railway Workers Union decided to support us when the split occurred). It was necessary to mobilise the protest of all masses around the strike and develop it towards massive mass action. **The struggle of the Tamil masses should have**

been integrated into it. If that was achieved at that time, naturally it would have grown into an all Island mass struggle posing the question of power outside parliament. This would have eroded the mass support of the UNP and made the left movement (of course backed by the Tamil liberation struggle) the main opposition to Sirima's government. On our own we could'nt do much towards this end. At that stage we were not accepted by the Trade Union Movement as an Independent alternate leadership to any significant degree.

Old leadership not only refused to look back and accept mistakes, but kept on making new mistakes. They did not see anything fundamentally wrong in the coalition tactic. It was on the national question that they retreated the most. They were not prepared to discuss this problem in detail particularly with reference to the growth of the separatist slogan. According to them much of it has been solved through Colvin's Constitution. We maintained that on the contrary the problem has been aggravated by it. Solution can come on'y through a Constitution that recognises the right to self-determination (i. e. the right to secede).

Vasudeva and others who were still members of the party were thrown out when the old leadership realised that we were pressing for a party conference. They were not prepared to meet our criticism of their 'new' resolution before the party membership. In the resolution which we put forward with the intention of going before a party conference, we showed that the unions can be won over only by putting forward a bold program and taking the mass struggle forward instead of limiting oneself to the bourgeois parliamentary politics. Our resolution said,

"If were to use the united front tactic.

- (a) We must come out with a draft program of the proposed Front.
- (b) Working class must be moved into action based on common and urgent demands.

- (c) Agitations and campaigns must be launched on relevant issues among the youth, the students, the peasants and the national minorities"

Our struggle - in Sinhala - Pages 40 and 84

As we expected the ULF based on the parliamentary reformist program of the old leadership did not emerge as a viable alternative. It could not even attract the imagination of workers, leave apart from that of the national minorities. In the election of 1977 the left parties lost badly. After pretending to be good temple goers and champions of Sinhala Chauvinists over a decade, our old leaders lost even the support of the urban workers who stood by them when they spoke of parity and were exposing those who pretended to be good Buddhists. Sacrificing principles takes one only to one place; dustbin of history.

During the election we tried to enter the United Left Front of the leaders while proposing a discussion on the program that the leadership put forward. They refused without any consideration. Hence we participated in the election as a surreptitious force within the United Left Front. The Old leadership sent letters to all their candidates not to allow us to appear on any U. L. F. platform. But many candidates saw it differently. They saw that our presence was vital in getting the attention of the militant sections, particularly the radical youth and the national minorities. We were much in demand on the platform of scores of U. L. F. candidates.

In the election the U. L. F. was mauled. This was a rejection of the policies of the old leadership. With the defeat of the left it was very evident that communal feelings would be aroused by both rightwing parties in order to make way for their ambitions. History has shown that the defeat or set backs of the left movement paves the way for communal elements to move forward. Prior to the August 1977 incidents we appealed to all left parties and workers organisations to unite in forming defence committees against communalists. On August 16th we had a Hartal Commemoration meeting to which we had invited all left parties. We made use of this meeting to warn the people that the

rumours "coming from Jaffna" were for the purpose of promoting communal disturbances. Strangely enough, except for the Daily Mirror none of the other papers reported this aspect of our meeting.

As the disturbances developed we immediately went into action. We published a special issue of our paper against communal violence. Appeals were sent to all left parties and T.U.'s including that of the old leadership on 18th August. Special letters were sent to the parties of the ULF on 23rd August. In spite of their inactivity we organised defence committees with the help of other organisations in many areas and work places where we had significant influence. Kandy Peoples Defense Front is one such organisation in which we participated. There we collaborated with all left parties (and sections of the SLFP) in developing an influential democratic organ to fight against communalism. Of course what we could do was not much. It was a time of set back for the left movement in general and in addition we were still not accepted as an independent leadership. Our press statement issued on 18th went as follows:

"Left faction of the Lanka Samasamaja party.

We strongly condemn the police repression launched against the Tamil people of the North and the attempt by some capitalist sections to make use of this incident to arouse communal feelings. Though these acts appear to be accidental, this nature of criminal background is necessary to launch the fascist solution necessitated by the present crisis in capitalism. It is this necessity which escalate these unfortunate incidences.

During the previous government, the rights of the Tamil people were taken away, and the burden of the capitalist crisis were placed on depressed sections. Whilst there were cuts in job opportunities and university admissions which intensely angered them,

police repression was intensified. This was the reason that made them to gather around the narrow bourgeois nationalist slogan of a Separate State.

Since the workers parties were caged in a coalition without showing the real way out to the workers, peasants and other depressed sections while the full weight of the capitalist crisis came on them, these sections became prey to the rightists. Similarly Tamil people too ended up under bourgeois nationalist leaders.

We appeal to all T. U.'s and left parties to mobilise the total strength of the T. U.'s and the left movement in defense of the democratic rights of national minorities against communalism".

-18th August Vasudeva and Vickramabahu

We were perhaps the first left party or group to send a delegation from the centre to Jaffna just after the disturbances. A delegation led by Dr. Vickramabahu went to Jaffna to make observations and put forward our views. We participated in a number of discussions and seminars. Though in a distorted form, our intervention was reported in many daily papers. During this period our actions were significant though we were tied down by not being a fully developed party.

By December 1977 we called for a party conference of the L. S. S. P. We took this step as all our attempts to get back to the Party and hold a conference were thwarted by the old leadership. Not only did they want to divide the Party but also wanted to keep us out of the United Left Front. We collected well over one third of the signatures of Party members thereby establishing the legitimate right to call a Party conference. Naturally we invited all members including the old leadership. (Last Conference was held in November '72 and by collecting signatures of one third of the party membership we had the authority to call a conference). They of course did not come. This historic conference which was attended by an overwhelming majority of the

party members, totally rejected the opportunist politics of the old leadership and opted for revolutionary Marxism. The resolutions passed unanimously had the following section.

The Federal Party built by the liberal bourgeoisie based on the middle class of the Tamil people, is a populism development of the 1950's and 1960.s However in the context of the intense capitalist crisis this populism has evolved as a national liberation movement struggling against the oppression of the state. Though moving within the Capitalist framework it has taken the shape of a real national movement. Hindu, Tamil speaking leaders have emerged displacing the westernised English speaking leaders. Pushing caste issues to the background and the need to unite overcoming these conflicts has emerged to the fore-front.

As in the month of August '77 it is possible for communal problems to arise in the future. In fact these will be aroused by JR's crowd. During the August incidents J. R. safeguarded his popularity among the Sinhala Buddhist forces based on Sinhala petty bourgeoisie. His idea was to allow the situation in the country to develop so as to frighten the leaders of the Tamil Liberation Front. This has been successful to some extent. Agitation, has been moderated by the Tamil petty (liberal) bourgeois leaders. Conflict between the Northern and the Eastern sections has increased. Above all the contradiction between the radical youth and the leaders has been aggravated and the youth are looking towards the left. Only we, who accept their democratic rights specially their right of self-determination and who has a working class base, are capable of winning over the Tamil people from the nationalist struggle to the anti capitalist struggle. When J. R's proposed development program, which is to be launched through District Committees and District Ministers with the help of Amirthalingams goes into bankruptcy from its very inception; our intervention will be of the greatest importance. Our special task would be to explain the nature of the national question and particularly to fight against the deep rooted communal petty bourgeois concept within the Sinhala masses".

From there onwards we have reorganised the Lanka Samasamaja party under the new leadership. The old leadership collected about 300 people from various contacts (mostly personal) and held a sham conference in March '78 and unconstitutionally claims the name of the party. It will be the workers helped by other oppressed masses, who will be the arbiter of this dispute. Already the railway workers, office workers, clerks, large sections of the corporation and private sector workers, estate workers and many other sections of workers have made their decision and look towards us for political leadership. Students and youth leagues have followed the same course. Since December 1977 our Party has been in the fore front in the fight against the policies of J. R. and the UNP. One of our first acts was to campaign for and organise by hoisting black flags and other means against the policies of this Government, on the February 04 th on the occasion of J, R assuming Presidential powers. A large number of our Comrades were arrested including our Party Secretary Dr. Vickramabahu. They were remanded and kept in prison for weeks though the police fail to frame any charges against them.

The issue of selections for university admissions came up again in the beginning of the year 1978. There were a number of communal and chauvanistic elements, particularly those who under the patronage of the SLFP enjoyed various benefits, were trying to incite the university students with communalism. Many left parties were falling prey on this disgusting propaganda. At this critical moment we intervened successfully to stall this communal twist in the student struggle. With our guidance The Lanka Student Federation took the following position,

"They (i. e. any student organisation) are helping the Government to find a means to step out of the problems by pretending that Standardization along 'racial' lines is some sort of a 'solution'. Any student or left organisation that does this is unwittingly falling into the trap of racialism"

—Leaflet of L. S. F.—(Sinhala, Tamil, English)

It is our view that capitalism which is in deep crisis, is increasingly using communalism as a means of diverting the rising mass protest. The recent campaign against the so called Tiger movement is so full of contradictions, one gets the impression that it is all a part of a Machiavellian plan. 'Wanted' posters were put up of people who were easily accessible to the police. An impression was created that a war has been declared by the "Tamil Terrorists" against the Sinhala masses. The latest stunt of Cyril Mathew and the Vice-chancellor about examination scripts is yet another step in this direction.

Under these circumstances it is very necessary for all those who are actually interested in winning the just right of the Tamil speaking people to develop the correct method of struggle. The Samasamaja Party under the new leadership, proposes the mobilisation of all forces against the repressive state power of the capitalists in general and the UNP Government in particular. It should be a mass struggle centered around the general strike of the working class. Such a Hartal movement should naturally incorporate the struggle of the Tamil speaking people. We must throw out this government by such a mass movement. Our aim should not be merely to force an election, but to launch a movement to wrench the state power from the hand of the capitalists. People should themselves take power in each factory and each locality, destroying the state power of capitalism. This should develop from the very Hartal movement, which should mobilize all exploited strata of the population for the struggle for real freedom and liberty. This alone will bring justice and autonomy to the Tamil speaking people.

In conclusion it is very necessary to deal with certain questions raised by comrade Karalasingham of the old leadership and Comrade Lionel Bopage of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, and clear the confusion that prevails about the concepts, right of self determination, separatism and autonomy. Comrade Karalasingham, suddenly after 15 years, has realised it is worthwhile to republish his "Way out for Tamil speaking people". During that period when the LSSP old leadership

(and the CP leadership) was trailing behind the SLFP completely betraying all the principles that they stood for before 64, the problems of the Tamil speaking people in this area in which their subjugation was total. Now in 1978 Comrade Karalasingham without revealing the truth about the so called coalition tactic, is trying to cover-up their folly by lies and distortions.

To start with, Karlo says that the LSSP old leadership (of course including himself) at least made a genuine attempt to stand by the very limited program outlined in his book "Way forward" in 1963. They tried their best to defend it within the United Front against the non proletarian and anti-working class elements inside and outside the coalition. No! a complete lie! on the contrary the old leadership totally abandoned even this limited position and some times joined the worst chauvanists of the SLFP. In particular when the question of standardisation came up the old leadership defended mediawise standardization against some members of the government who wanted it withdrawn.

But the Gem in the postscript of Karlo is his reference to the 'novel' doctrine of Nissanka Wijayarathne "... that although the Sinhala speaking people are a majority in Ceylon, they still suffer from psychological weakness of a minority as they are a minority in the geographical region of Deccan India." Well, well, Karlo have you forgotten so easily that Comrade Leslie Gunawardena came out with this 'theory' a long time ago? Perhaps Nissanka Wijayarathne learnt it from him! In 1970/72 Leslie came out with this disgusting adaptation to the chauvanists and it was one point against which our tendency carried out an intense battle within the rank and file of the party. (In fact there are several articles in which Leslie openly took this position of rationalising Sinhala Chauvanists i. e. - Magazine Commemorating the 35th Anniversary of the L. S. S. P. - 1970 - page 7)

Finally, this arguments against the right of self determination of the Tamil speaking people is ridiculous. Without going into details we humbly request this 'Marxist scholar'

to go through Lenin's writings on national question again! A few points must be made clear. Leadership of the Tamil mass movement has for the last 15 years moved totally into the hands of reaction instead of following the left movements due to the policies of the LSSP and opportunism in working class politics in general. Nevertheless, during the last two years we see an increasing'y radical element forcing the bourgeois leadership of the T. U. L. F. to proclaim itself to be socialist. Already the Tamil masses are directly confronting the reactionary bourgeois state machinery, particularly police oppression. Karlo who for a time was helping the smooth operation of this reactionary bourgeois state machinery, still does not realize that he was on the wrong side of the barricades particularly during '73/76 when the Tamil youth were confronting the state machine of the oppressor on a major scale. The belated and pathetic attempt of Karlo to rethink in terms of civilized norms shows very clearly the plight of the old leadership.

This takes us to the present position held by the JVP and comrade Lionel Bopage. They of course appear to accept the position developed by us regarding the right of self-determination, which of course is a position developed so clearly by Lenin. But still only in abstract theory. When it comes to concrete slogans and actions they come out with strange statements. Lionel says "under a socialist republic the division of the country into two parts as well as the arbitrary centralization will equally be opposed." To say the least this is very confusing. What exactly do you mean by "division of the country into two parts... will be opposed"? How does this victorious 'proletariat' propose to do this, by canvassing among the Tamil people or...? Is this your defense of right of secession?

It is very necessary to understand the concept of sepa-
tism and autonomy very clearly. Every set of people should have autonomy or self government. As Lenin very clearly points out, this is a universal principle of a democracy. In other words alien or out side elements cannot be allowed to be in effective control of a distinct regional administration. They should be **thrown out immediately by any means**, and the Samasamajist give unconditional support to such a struggle.

Once power is taken out of these out side forces shou'd one decide for political seperation.? Naturally this will depend on so many conditions. Samasamajists wil **aggitate or advise** for such a seperation only if such a development is going to enhance the class struggle in the entire area. This is why we Samasamajists while giving unconditional support to the Tamil speaking people in their struggle against the Sinhala dominated Military Police bureacracy of the northern and eastern provinces maintained that a democratic solution which preserves the unity of the two nations is possible.

What are our proposals for unity? Firstly the right of secession should be in-corporated in the constitution as a principle. Secondly, the autonomy or the self-government of Tamil speaking areas should be preserved. Thirdly, the right of Tamil citizens to communicate with the state in their own language (Departments, Courts, Police, Hospitals, Kachcheries) should be established. Fourthly, discrimination at the univer-
sity entrance, job-selections, and land allocations based on language or race should be completely eliminated. Fifthly, at proper share of the national development should be allocated to the northern and eastern provinces. In this context colonisation schemes in the northern and eastern provinces will be in the hand of the regional administration. This is exactly the essence of what we suggested in the draft programme for the United Left Front in 1976.

It is clear only such a program will look after the interest of the Tamils in the entire country, particularly that of estate labour. Estate Tamils are not intergrated into the T. U. L. F. Even the bourgeois leadership of these Tamils, Thondaman, has left the T. U. L. F to join the U. N. P. This shows that this section of Tamils do not identify with the Tamil national movement to any significant degree.

There is a more important aspect to this problem. The TULF today has developed into a mass movement incorporating within itself several currents. If it is accepted as a mass national movement with a bourgeois leadership, what should be the attitude of the proletarian leadership towards it? Our attitude

is very clear. We see the TULF as the twin movement of populism in the Sinhala areas. That is the SLFP, JVP and other radical petty bourgeoisie movements put together there is no difference between Amirthalingam and Sirima in that sense, or between the youth radicals of both camps. The rise of the Federal Party at the expense of the G.G.'s Congress was very much similar to the rise of the SLFP defeating the UNP. Both popular movements underwent serious crisis in recent times throwing out youth radicals. It was the lack of an independent working class alternative during the last 15 years (due to coalition politics) that kept these political currents from falling into a secondary place.

That is why we say that we are prepared to join hands with the TULF in action in defense of democratic rights including the right to canvass and agitate for secession. This is the defense of the right of self determination in concrete terms. Of course this does not exclude either propaganda and agitation against seperation or the exposure of bourgeoisie nationalism of TULF leadership. It is on this question Comrade V. Ponnambalam (breakaway C. P. leader) has dragged his followers of Red Tamil movement to a total blind alley. When we met Comrade Ponnambalam during our visit to Jaffna after the August incidents, we explained our position and warned him of his adaptation to the TULF leadership. He is trying to convert Amirthalingam to socialism by joining the TULF. This is exactly what the old left leadership was trying to do with the political twin sister of Amirthalingam (i. e. Sirima) for the last 15 years!

What is necessary today is a United left Front based on a truly anti-imperialist-democratic program (which of course opens the way to socialism). Such a program should incorporate the elimination of the oppression and the discrimination suffered by the Tamil speaking people. It should propose to give power of the state to the people so that people will rule themselves without any alien force intimidating in their day to day life. Naturally there will be autonomy for the Tamils of the North and the East. There should not be any privileged position to any language or religion. We openly appeal to

all Leftists to come to a United Front to fight for such a program. We appeal to the old leadership of the Left movement and the JVP. Reluctance of these leaders to come to a such United Front can be explained only one way :- They are not prepared to face the mass mobilisation that will arise out of left unity based on a progressive program. Emergence of a United Left Front will push the mass movement beyond the Parliament Politics.

Such a United Left Front should go into working agreements on action on specific issues both with the TULF and the SLFP. In developing a real mass movement, led by the working class it is necessary to go into common action with both populist movements, against the reactionary UNP and the state oppression. Such actions will expose the limited nature of the TULF and SLFP leadership and draw the radicalising Sinhala and Tamil petty bourgeoisie and youth behind the working class and the left movement. Naturally there cannot be any compromise with these bourgeois leaderships.

If the political alternative of a Left government is posed in the context of the development of a massive Hartal movement, i. e. a general strike supported by the struggles of other masses, then it will be the final chapter of the capitalist power in Sri Lanka. Not only will the UNP be thrown out but the masses will move towards organizing a revolutionary power, a revolutionary Left government, smashing bourgeoisie state which will bring liberation, freedom and democracy to all oppressed sections of society. Such a revolutionary power, having established liberty and democracy will move towards establishing a socialist society.

We, of the Lanka Samasamaja party appeal to the Tamil speaking people to join in this common struggle that will develop in the period before us.

Nov. 1978

APPENDIX - I (Left Samasamaja Article)

PROBLEMS OF THE TAMILS

The seriousness of the problem facing the Tamil minority can hardly be exaggerated. The Tamils are at a decisive turn of the road and the way the mass of the Tamil people in the North and East begin to move may be decisive for the whole country.

To a Marxist the factor that dominates the history of the national question over the last fifteen years is the failure of the left. The traditional left leaders when they entered a period of class collaborationist politics in the mid 60s also betrayed the national minorities. The traditional left parties are distrusted by the Tamil people as a whole. What else could be expected! Except for a small trade union base the party organisation in the North and East are alienated from the mass of the people and the youth and are making no headway in this direction. Even today the traditional left leaders offer no action strategy or realistic answer to the most pressing immediate or long term problems of the Tamil people. Such are the incidental consequences of Popular Frontism.

The failure of the left however extends beyond the established left to include the sects also; including Shanmugadasan. What do they have to say? After giving the LSSP and CP leaders a fine belting the only positive suggestion they have to make is "we will solve the problems of the Tamils once socialism is established, so be patient". They talk lot of stupidity around the Maoist mythology of the "principal contradiction" which means asking the Tamils to forget their problems because Chairman Mao wants to fight the Russians (and the Americans?). All of the smaller sects have absolutely no way forward to show the Tamils. They are incapable of linking up the fight of national minorities against oppression with the fight of the working class against class rule. They cannot do it because they stand outside both movements.

It is imperative that we who stand for a revolutionary left platform within the LSSP discuss this matter in a forthright way. Two essential and connected points constitute the heart of the matter. Firstly, the Sinhalese and Tamil people

can live together as one nation state only by the mutual and voluntary agreement of the mass of the two peoples. The forcible retention of a minority within a state is a form of oppression that the revolutionary working class movement rejects. Without a sympathetic and understanding approach towards the national minority their confidence can never be confidence can never be gained. Without recognising their fundamental right to self-determination all talk of unity and brotherhood are empty words. What sense is there in attempting to persuade a minority to remain united if in the first instance we do not recognise their right to make the final decision one way or the other. Secondly we do not advocate or advise the Tamil masses to separate. (The fact that the majority of the Tamil masses are probably against secession at the moment is beside the point because this situation can change depending on the stupidity of the government) So while we recognise the right and freedom of the mass of the Tamil people to make the eventual decision we will also explain patiently and campaign indefatigably among the Tamil people to show that for social, economic and political reasons secession will be a serious step backward on the historical road for both races. A full discussion of why this is so omitted at this point for reasons of space.

Against this background we will also suggest how the Tamil masses should struggle today. The Jaffna peninsula is under virtual military occupation, the administration (Kachcheri, public departments etc.) imposed by the central government behaves like haughty alien towards the common people, the right to canvass for secession is prohibited by bourgeois law (we ourselves do not advocate separation but forcible suppression of the right to canvass for separation is a form of national oppression) the North and the East are given utterly step-motherly treatment in the national development plans discrimination in employment, education and culture is now more or less accepted state policy and finally the state gives little assistance to the Northern farmer in cultivation and marketing. These are the main components of national oppression in Sri Lanka. Read over the list again, and who

is enemy number one? **The principal enemy of the Tamil masses is the bourgeois state machine itself and through it the bourgeois political leadership of Sirima-Felix and the late Dudley-JR.** It is true that the left leaders have failed the Tamil masses but nevertheless they do not constitute its principal enemy, they have merely been bad friends.

It is absolutely crucial that the radical sections of the nationalist movement among the Tamils become explicitly conscious that its immediate political struggles take on the form of a confrontation with the **state itself**. This is inevitable in a period of deep capitalist crisis in a country with a rotten, unproductive bourgeois class. The mudalali millionaires are products of the abuse of governmental power by the Sirima-Felix-reactionaries. The New rich have accumulated wealth under the protective umbrella of state privilege, corruption and nepotism. Every industrial action and strike wave even in the private sector, inevitably draws the state into conflict. This is one feature of bonapartism.

When therefore the working class moves into action, as it will in the coming months, it will generate conditions in which radical elements among the minorities must move in to action, even on the basis of their own demands. This they must do if they are serious about their own political demands. Failure to do so would be a miserable betrayal of the Tamil people themselves, a betrayal of the only opportunity they will get to advance. All their politics of first Ponnambalam and later the F. P. have proved that, whether in parliament or by direct action, efforts to solve the problems of the Tamils by the exclusive actions of the Tamils alone have ended in dismal failure. Today even the most radical youth sections among the Tamils both within and outside the TUF want to struggle but they hesitate, rightly because to launch some foolish and isolated adventure which will end in disaster is criminal. They fail to mobilise the mass of the poorer Tamils for action because they do not provide a plan of action that looks realistic. It is mainly to this section of the radical Tamil youth who are re-thinking their position and groping for clear theoretical positions that this letter is addressed.

In this context the radical sections of the nationalist movement who wish to represent the interests of the poor sections of the Tamil masses must be vigilant against two tendencies. The first are those who talk of foreign help and foreign intervention. All these empty utterances are fantasies with no factual basis, nothing can come of it except castles in the air. Those who spread illusions about these mythical allies are in practice only sowing confusion in the minds of the Tamil masses and delaying or preventing their coming closer to their only real ally, the national working class.

The second point on which the true radicals must be vigilant concerns the right wing sections of the TUF leadership and the upper class elements within the nationalist movement. The doctors, lawyers, professionals, high government officials and so on who are present in large numbers within the TUF constitute a bulwark of reaction and conservatism. The right wing section of the leadership is not capable of leading any kind of action, direct or indirect. They lack the blood and spunk for it; under them the movement is stuck in the mud and unable to move.

Earlier on we spoke of the need for the genuine radicals among the national-minorities to move into action side by side with the working class. If the working class really poses a revolutionary situation what will be the reaction of the upper class elements within the TUF? Will they really permit an alliance when the whole bourgeois state and property are at issue? No; they will yell about the "red devil" the "Godless Marxist" and join up with every right wing conspiracy in the South. They will become traitors even to their own movements the moment the question of a workers and peasants government is posed as a stark possibility. Genuine radicals must be armed by theory and by the determination to break out and move forward even under these conditions. This needs study and analysis of the nature of their own movements and organisations. Genuine militants within the nationalist movement must learn how to take their own specific nationalist demands forward while at the same time taking the general revolutionary movement forward. And in this context we know that within

the Tamil nationalist and youth movements there are indeed many genuine militants who have no interest in defending capitalism, and who come from the poorest sections of the population. It is mainly to them that this letter is addressed.

There is only one further point that has to be made. That is; the need for unity between the revolutionary proletariat and the national minority. This is necessary above all else for practical reasons. It is one thing to recognize the right to self-determination in theory but for its translation to practical forms the support of the working class and progressive mass in the majority race is necessary. This is a part of the work of the revolutionary Marxist within the majority-education, experience raising the consciousness. The working class does not wish that the national minorities approach their problems through fratricidal civil war. In that case only reaction and black backwardness is victorious in the end on both sides, so it inscribes the fight for the democratic rights of the minorities on its own banner. The left Samasamajists will fight for within the working class; we are confident of giant steps forward in this effort.

The working class seeks the support of the national minorities not just as fighting allies. In practical terms in the case of Sri Lanka this may not be a decisive factor though of course the involvement of the plantation workers is decisive. There is a far deeper involvement however that is indeed decisive. The national question is the key element, the final criterion, on which the consciousness of the working class has to be broken from bourgeois ideology. Once Marx has said something only a fool would attempt to paraphrase it, so in conclusion we quote Marx's letter to Kugelmann of November 29th 1869 on the Irish question:-

"I have become more and more convinced—and the only question is to drive this conviction home to the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland most definitely from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes

the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship. And this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading strings of the ruling classes, because it will have to join with them in a common front against Ireland. Every one of its movements in England itself is crippled by the strife with the Irish, who form a very important section of the working class in England. The prime condition of the emancipation here—the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy—remains impossible because its position cannot be stormed so long as it maintains its strongly entrenched outposts in Ireland" (Emphasis added)

Similarly we too advance the demands of the national minorities in the interests of the Sri Lanka Proletariat.

Dr. Kumar David
25th March 1976.

APPENDIX — II (Left Samasamaja Article)

THE NATIONAL MINORITY QUESTION AND THE WORKING CLASS

It is clear from the events of the past few weeks that the struggles of the Tamil minority against the oppression of the Sri Lanka Capitalist State is going to be of fundamental importance on the national political scene in the coming period. It is equally clear that the government as well as various Bourgeois chauvinists will make use of this to fan the fires of communalism and divide the working class and other sections of the oppressed Sinhala masses from the Tamil masses. Especially when it becomes patently clear that the UNP promises were empty ones, when the masses begin to realize that the government has no solutions either to the problems of rising prices or of unemployment the bourgeoisie will attempt to divert attention from the economic issues by appealing to the worst Sinhala petty bourgeois prejudices against the oppressed minorities.

Thus it is essential for the emancipation of the working class that it should have a correct Marxist understanding of the minorities question. In its struggle for power the working class needs as allies all other oppressed sections of the masses

including the Tamil masses. Equally the Tamil masses in their struggle against national oppression need to ally themselves with the working class. The struggle is a common one against the Sri Lanka capitalist state.

Lenin on the National question

The Marxist position on this question has been most clearly enunciated by Lenin especially in the celebrated polemic against Rosa Luxemburg "The right of Nations to Self determination". As Lenin pointed out, not to accept the right of self determination, amounts to support of the oppression of national minorities by the bourgeoisie of the majority nationality. Marxists are of course opposed to the breaking up of national entities. But they are even more opposed to the forcible suppression of the democratic rights of national minorities and their forced union with the majority nationality. The Leninist position was that of voluntary union which can become a reality in a federated socialist republic of different nationalities (communities).

This principled position was put into practice during and after the Bolshevik revolution. Indeed Lenin's nationalities policy was instrumental in securing the support of the national minorities to the socialist revolution. After the revolution Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, under bourgeois Governments and under the influence of imperialism, decided to separate and were allowed to do so by the soviet power. But in the Ukraine and in Georgia the workers overthrew the bourgeois power and with the support of the peasantry set up their own soviet power which decided to federate with the Russian Soviet power. Thus was the basis laid for the union of soviet socialist republics on a foundation of mutual trust and co-operation. Of course with the betrayal of the revolution and Leninist principles under Stalin, national oppression—Great Russian chauvinism, was reintroduced in the Soviet Union—and that is precisely one of the many counter-revolutionary features of Stalinism that the Trotskyist movement exposed—but that is a different story.

Imperialism and the national question

In many of the ex-colonial countries the national question has not been resolved. Capitalism in these countries was developed under the aegis of the imperialist power and necessarily took a distorted one sided character. The native bourgeoisie of these countries were merely pale reflections of their imperialist masters and were unable to complete any of the bourgeois democratic tasks in these countries that the imperialist bourgeoisie had completed in the imperialist countries in the 19th century. Among these tasks the consolidation of national unity through the rapid development and extension of the market, was a principal one. Furthermore the imperialists who followed a divide and rule policy in the colonies left deep scars on the body politic—each nationality was deeply suspicious and resentful of the 'privileges' of the other. A good example of this is the way that the British encouraged the Muslim League against the national democratic movement led by the Congress in India.

Furthermore even after political independence these ex-colonies which did not abolish capitalism remained economically tied to the imperialist structure. The transfer of the surplus generated in the ex-colonies to the imperialist centres continued. Even during the 20 year long upswing of the world capitalist economy the development generated in the ex-colonies was marginal. In these circumstances there was little room for the Bourgeoisie to solve the national question. The bourgeoisie of the dominant community would tend to distribute the meagre surplus generated among the majority community, at the expense of the minority—of course keeping the lion's share for itself. Especially where populist governments came into power this was the case.

The national question in Sri Lanka.

The history of relations between the Tamil minority and the Sinhala majority followed this pattern. The problem surfaced as a language issue with the coming to power of Bandaranaike populism. This movement was precisely the ins-

trument used by the bourgeoisie to divert the rising frustrated petty bourgeois masses from becoming allies of the working class. It played on the worst chauvinist prejudices of the Sinhala petty bourgeois, it used the existence of a linguistic barrier to the advancement of the educated rural upper petty bourgeoisie to mobilise them against the UNP. Naturally this party (the SLFP) of upstart bourgeois had no place for the Tamil minority. In power it used the expansion of the state sector to give jobs to the rural upper petty bourgeois youth, the Sinhala only act was in effect a bar to the career prospects of the educated Tamil petty bourgeoisie.

The Left movement in this country failed to advance a fully worked out Leninist solution to the national minorities question. It viewed this issue purely as a language issue, but within these limitations it (at least the LSSP) took a principled position of advocating equal status for both Tamil and Sinhala. However with the advent of popular frontist politics, tail ending the S. L. F. P and joining a bourgeois government, in 1964, this position on the language issue was also dropped. Just as abandoning the 21 demands movement, and the ULF (63-64) put paid to the prospect of mobilising the class against the capitalist state, so the dropping of its principled position on language led to the complete erosion of the base that the LSSP-CP had amongst the Tamils and blocked the possibilities that existed for building a fighting alliance between the working class and the national minorities.

But the nadir of the left movements position on the national question was reached when the '65 UNP-Federal coalition attempted to work out a bourgeois-patch up 'solution' to the minority problem. This district council solution should have been criticized, but from the left. The socialist alternative should have been advanced. Instead the left movement capitulated to the worst anti Tamil prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie and tailed the S. L. F. P. to oppose the UNP-Federal "solution" from the right! i. e. from the national chauvinist position. The LSSP-CP at this juncture found itself

to the right of the UNP and was seen to be extreme advocates of Sinhala chauvinism by the Tamil masses. All this in the name of winning the rural petty bourgeoisie (or rather the bourgeois political exploiter of the rural masses - Sirima Bandaranaike) to socialism!

The repression of the Tamil Minority by the "United Front" government exacerbated the situation. Again as a consequence of popular frontism the workers parties were seen by the Tamil masses as agents of Sinhala bourgeois nationalism and were held responsible for the repression. This situation led to the demand for a separate state by the Tamil bourgeois nationalists. The very failure of the leading comrades of the LSSP-CP to take up a principled Leninist position has led to a situation where the Tamil masses especially the youth have rallied behind Tamil bourgeois nationalists.

We of the Left faction of the LSSP oppose to separation. Instead we advocate the voluntary union of the two communities in a socialist federation. The enormous economic dislocations, the movement of population the opportunities created for racists on both sides to inflame communal passions make separation an extremely harmful prospect for the future well being of the working people of this country. At the same time however we are implacably opposed to all attempts by the bourgeoisie and its state to resolve the question by repression. The working class can win the confidence of the Tamil minority only by recognising the minorities' right of self determination.

—Gurusinghe
September - 77

Dr. Vickramabahu Bandara Korunaratne was a brilliant student at Aranda College during the Meththananda-Vijayathilaka era. After entering the University of Ceylon as an Engineering student he was increasingly drawn towards politics and joined the L. S. S. P. in 1963. He assumed a leadership in all student struggles of that time.

He passed out with first class Honours in Electrical Engineering and was absorbed into the academic staff of the Peradeniya Engineering Faculty. By that time he had emerged as a leader of the Leftwing Caucus of the L.S.S.P. in Kandy area. In 1967 he proceeded to the University of Cambridge, England for higher studies. At Cambridge he was active in politics and was for two consecutive years Secretary of the South Asian Socialist Society.

Returning to Sri Lanka in 1970 September he assumed duties as a lecturer, Faculty of Engineering Peradeniya and was actively engaged in the left tendency of the L. S. S. P. He was suspended from Party immediately after the 1972 conference. During the period 1972-1977 several times he was taken into custody for questioning by the Police for campaigning against the rightwing leadership of the S.L.F.P. After the 1977 December Party conference he was elected Secretary of the L.S.S.P. (New leadership)

On February 04th 1978 he was arrested for hoisting black flags and remanded at Bogambara Jail in Kandy. Subsequently he was interdicted from the Senior Lecturer-ship in the University. He is still under Interdiction.

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